

Opening Statement of the Honorable Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on "Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission"
July 10, 2012
(As Prepared for Delivery)

I welcome a fully constituted FCC to our subcommittee today, and I extend a special greeting to the newest Commissioners Rosenworcel and Pai. You will find that the members of this subcommittee take their work seriously and are fully observant of the activities at the FCC, the changes in the audio, video and data marketplaces, and the need to keep the Internet free from government control—foreign or domestic. We do our research, and we complete our work.

I want to congratulate Commissioner McDowell for his fine remarks in Rome in June. You, more than anyone I know, have consistently and forcefully stood up for a free and open Internet. Our subcommittee has heeded your message and, thanks to the leadership of Rep. Mary Bono Mack, provided the House with a bipartisan resolution calling on our negotiators at the World Conference on International Telecommunications to maintain the multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance.

While I know Chairman Genachowski sometimes has less than laudatory comments regarding our work to free up spectrum through incentive auctions and fulfill the call of the 9/11 Commission by finally approving legislation to pay for, and build out, an interoperable public safety network, know that we are keenly interested in making sure that the FCC and the NTIA fulfill the intent of the legislation. Further, if either agency has questions about the intent of the law or identifies problems with it, the subcommittee expects to hear the specific concerns immediately. We also continue to examine how federal agencies might use spectrum more efficiently so that we can put more in the hands of commercial providers while simultaneously helping the government do its work better. I anticipate that Representatives Guthrie and Matsui, who Ranking Member Eshoo and I have appointed to lead a working group on this issue, may have questions for you in this regard.

You need to know that I—and a majority of this subcommittee, and indeed a majority of the House—remain deeply committed to the cause of improving transparency and accountability at the FCC. Too often the public has had to turn to the courts to prove procedural wrongs at the Commission, wasting taxpayer resources and leaving the impression with some that the Commission considers itself above due process. I commend the current chairman for the thoughtful reforms he has instituted, but these are but a bare minimum with no guarantee that a less thoughtful chairman in the future would follow a similar path.

Finally, our subcommittee is very interested in making sure competitive market forces, driven by empowered consumers, are allowed to work in a way that spurs new technology, innovation and creation of American jobs. The FCC is an important player in this effort, and should not abuse its power to achieve outcomes it lacks statutory authority to accomplish on its own.

Again, thank you for your service and for coming before our subcommittee.

###